

LEA Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services

In order to comply with Section 2001(i)(1) of the ARP Act and U.S. Department of Education's Interim Final Rule requires each LEA that receives ARP ESSER III funds to submit a plan that describes how it will safely return to in-person instruction and ensure continuity of services, including LEAs that have already returned to in-person instruction. The LEA must include all elements in the LEA Plan for Safe Return to In-Person Instruction and Continuity of Services that it develops and publishes on its website. The plan should be published on the LEA's website by June 1, 2021.



**Lexington City Schools
300 Diamond Street
Lexington, VA 24450
540-463-7146**

Section 1: Introduction

The purpose of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III Fund is to help safely reopen and sustain the safe operation of schools and address the impacts of COVID-19 on the nation's students by addressing students' **academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs**. This plan describes how Lexington City Schools will maintain the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and division staff during and following the return to full in-person instruction. Questions about this plan should be directed to Rebecca Walters, Division Superintendent.

Lexington City Schools returned to primarily in-person instruction February 1, 2021 with 80% of students in K-8 attending school. As of April 12, 2021, 90% of K-8 students attended school in-person. After surveying all K-8 families regarding their intention for returning to school in-person for the 2021-2022 school year, 100% of K-8 students intend to return in-person beginning August 17, 2021.

Section 2: Maintaining Health and Safety

Lexington City Schools has taken and will continue to take actions to ensure the health and safety of students, educators, and other school and division staff during and following the return to full in-person instruction. A description of actions already taken and additional actions planned is below.

Lexington City Schools' health and safety policies and procedures continue to align with guidance from the CDC, VDH, VDOE, and the Central Shenandoah Health District.

Key mitigation strategies include:

- Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
- Use of cloth face coverings as required by the Governor's Executive Order

- Monitoring student and staff illness and absenteeism
- Encouraging students and staff to stay home when sick.
- Encouraging physical distancing in accordance with the CDC and Governor's Executive Order

In addition, Lexington City Schools has adopted policies on each of the following safety recommendations established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

- Universal and correct wearing of masks - Lexington City Schools aligns its masking policy with the Governor's current Executive Order following CDC guidance.
- Modifying facilities to allow for physical distancing (e.g., use of cohorts/podding) - During the 2020-2021 school year, students were cohorted into groups by classroom in K-8. Students remained in cohorts when feasibly possible during the school day, recess, and during lunch. Students will not be cohorted during the 2021-2022 school year; however, physical distancing will continue to be encouraged where possible.
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette - Lexington City Schools has added signage and hand sanitizing stations throughout the schools. Students and staff are encouraged to wash hands often and breaks are provided throughout the school day to support handwashing.
- Cleaning and maintaining healthy facilities, including improving ventilation - In consultation with our HVAC contractor, Lexington City Schools has increased fresh air supply to the greatest extent possible in all HVAC units division wide. The HVAC systems in both schools are fairly new, robust systems using the latest technology to support air quality. Lexington City Schools contracts with the HVAC provider to maintain systems on a consistent and as-needed basis. Lexington City Schools implemented procedures to clean high-touch areas regularly throughout the school day in all settings (restrooms, buses, classrooms, hallways). The school division purchased and implemented the use of electrostatic foggers, air purifiers, gloves and cleaning PPE, disinfectant wipes, hand sanitizer, etc.
- Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine, in collaboration with the State, local, territorial, or Tribal health departments - Lexington City Schools' school nurses completed a course on contact tracing through Johns Hopkins University and collaborated with our local health department for contact tracing. School nurses led efforts with school and district staff to complete thorough contact tracing when necessary. Lexington City Schools followed the guidelines for isolation and quarantine consistent with VDH and Central Shenandoah Health District.
- Diagnostic and screening testing - Lexington City Schools did not offer site-based diagnostic and screening testing.
- Efforts to provide vaccinations to school communities - Lexington City Schools partnered with VDH, Central Shenandoah Health District, Rockbridge County Public Schools, Buena Vista Public Schools, and the area's Emergency Management Systems to conduct vaccination clinics offered to all school district employees in January/February 2021. 90% of district employees elected to be vaccinated. Lexington City Schools shared local vaccination clinic information with school families via email and social media.
- Appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies - Lexington City Schools staff work collaboratively with any families and health care providers of children with disabilities with respect to health and safety policies.
- Coordination with state and local health officials - Lexington City Schools administration participates in weekly/monthly conference calls with the VDOE where information is shared directly from state and local health officials. Lexington City Schools administration participates in scheduled conference calls with officials from the Central Shenandoah Health District.

Section 3: Continuity of Services

Lexington City Schools has taken and will continue to take actions to ensure continuity of services, including but not limited to services to address students' academic needs and students' and staff social, emotional, mental health, and other needs.

Academic - Lexington City Schools provided a robust in-person and virtual learning program during the 2020-2021 school year, including daily synchronous instruction with teachers four days/week with asynchronous learning experiences on Fridays. Teachers and school staff have been available for support via email, phone, or conference as needed. Lexington City Schools carefully monitored academic performance for all K-8 students via quarterly data meetings, regular grade level meetings, IEP team meetings, etc... Students received progress and report cards with narrative descriptions of progress and areas for improvement. Lexington City Schools offered in-person support for struggling students on virtual learning days where needed. Lexington City Schools reassigned instructional staff to provide additional targeted academic support and expanded summer school offerings to include additional students in need of summer intervention K-8. Lexington City Schools offered virtual support to ELL students and families throughout the school year.

Social, Emotional, and Mental Health - Lexington City Schools' school counselors have worked collaboratively with student families and school staff to support the social, emotional, and mental health and wellness of all K-8 students. School counselors partner with teachers, parents/guardians, administration, and support staff to monitor student wellness and offer support and resources when necessary. K-5 classrooms implement a daily Morning Meeting routine where students and teachers discuss and engage in conversation and activities to support whole child wellness. The middle school offered a flexible lunch and recess time each day to support social and emotional student wellness and will implement a Teacher Advisory Group program using the *Responsive Classroom* curriculum in August 2021. School staff social committees have offered events and opportunities for staff to engage in social gatherings. PTAs for both schools have supported teacher and staff wellness with special events, treats, and funds to support teacher/staff needs particularly as related to the effects of COVID and stress. The Lexington City School Board allowed teachers to work off-site when possible, on asynchronous learning days, offered an early-release day for staff once a month on asynchronous days, and offered a one-time monetary bonus to all employees. The school division allowed employees with school-age children to bring their children to school to complete their virtual learning in a monitored environment so that employees could teach and work onsite. The school district promoted the use of the Employee Wellness Program offered through our health insurance program. Administration and Human Resources met with any individuals who requested a meeting to discuss accommodations or individualized support. The Lexington City Schools School Health Advisory Board (SHAB) has met to discuss and plan for support for student and staff wellness for the coming school year, to include opportunities to support social, physical, and emotional wellness.

Other - Lexington City Schools has provided continuous school meals programming from March 13, 2020 through June 2021. LCS partnered with Rockbridge County Public Schools to provide summer meals programming during Summer 2020. In a partnership with Washington and Lee University, LCS provided a Backpack Food Program to any interested student families. LCS has consistently provided grocery cards, internet access fees, clothing, school supplies, etc. for needy families. LCS has partnered with our local homeless shelter to provide transportation and other services and has worked with the Rockbridge Area Transportation System to deliver meals to families unable to pick up meals on virtual learning days.

Section 4: Opportunity for Public Comment

In developing the ARP ESSER Plan, Lexington City Schools has sought public input and taken such input into account as described below:

Lexington City Schools invited parent and stakeholder representatives to participate in targeted focus groups in the development of a Return-to-Learn plan in Summer 2020. The school district presented updated return-to-learn information at School Board meetings throughout the year, and shared information and updates to staff and families via email and the district website. Principals shared regular announcements and information via school newsletters, and the Superintendent presented return-to-learn plans and information to the Lexington City Council on multiple occasions during the year. The district has surveyed families at several points during the year regarding their plans for student learning. Lexington City administrators and School Board members considered all input offered from stakeholders via letter, email, public comment, or face-to-face meetings.

Section 5: Periodic Review and Revision of Plan

During the period of the ARP ESSER award (until September 2023), Lexington City Schools will periodically review and as needed, revise its plan for the safe return to in-person instruction and continuity of services. The plan will be reviewed at least every six months, and Lexington City Schools will seek and take into account public input during the review process. Plan revisions will address updated CDC guidance on safely reopening schools, if any are issued.

Section 6: Making the Plan Available to the Public

Lexington City Schools has taken the following steps to make this plan available to the public:

- The plan is posted at www.lexedu.org
- The plan may be orally translated for parents into preferred language. Contact Becky Smith at 463-5353 to request translation; and
- Upon request, a parent who is an individual with a disability as defined by the ADA may be provided with the plan in an alternative format accessible by contacting Julie Nicely at 463-7146.